

Agroforestry on marginal land

Producer profiles



Kaitie Adams
*Hudson Agroforestry
Demonstration Farm*

Hudson Agroforestry Demonstration Farm

At the Hudson Agroforestry Demonstration Farm, Kaitie manages 120 acres and a network of demonstration sites, implementing sustainable practices like windbreaks, riparian buffers, alley cropping, and silvopasture. These techniques stabilize soil, prevent nutrient runoff, and add biodiversity while increasing productivity on marginal and productive land alike.

Kaitie's agroforestry background

Kaitie's journey into agroforestry began in 2018 with the Savanna Institute, although she had been practicing agroforestry before formally learning about the lasting ecological, economic, and social benefits of integrating trees and perennials. Kaitie remains committed to expanding practices like food forests and intensive alley cropping and envisions a resilient, community-focused agroforestry model that enhances the land for future generations.



Nate Brownlee
Nightfall Farm

Nightfall Farm

At Nightfall Farm, Nate and his family manage 250 acres, including 100 tillable acres, 120 forested acres, and 30 acres of restored wetlands. Practicing silvopasture on 50 acres, they aim to improve the soil, provide shade for their animals, and enhance productivity on this marginal land.

Nate's agroforestry background

Alongside support from the Savanna Institute, Nate's background in forestry and his wife's experience on productive riparian buffers shaped their approach. Benefits include shade for animals and humans, firewood production, and the occasional fruit and nut harvest. Some of their challenges involve labor-intensive tree planting, high costs, and the need for tree protection in grazing areas. In the future, they would like to plant more productive trees, if federal conservation programs helped offset the high cost.



Kathy Dice
Red Fern Farm

Red Fern Farm

Red Fern Farm is a 88-acre farm that cultivates a diverse array of trees, shrubs, and perennials, generating income from nuts, fruits, seeds, and scionwood. They utilize rotational grazing through a flock of sheep, to fertilize and control vegetation among the groves planted on highly erodible, degraded soil.

Kathy's agroforestry background

As wildlife biologists, Kathy and her husband developed the comprehensive, integrated agroforestry system they now use on their farm. Their farm acts as a carbon sink, helping to reduce soil erosion to nearly negligible levels and absorbing pollutants from neighboring farms. Some of their challenges include pesticide drift, pest management, and limited research on innovative agroforestry techniques.



Elana Gingerich
Olivia's Orchard

Olivia's Orchard

Olivia's Orchard is a 40-acre chestnut farm in Southeast Iowa. With no pasture areas suited for row crops, Olivia's Orchard employs agroforestry, planting chestnuts on 12 acres and producing hay between tree rows (alley cropping), while a small beef herd grazes the timbered areas (silvopasture).

Elana's agroforestry background

Inspired by J. Russell Smith's Tree Crops, Elana saw agroforestry as a bridge between food production and conservation. Her future goals include implementing more multifunctional practices, though barriers like land access, long-term commitment, and funding persist.



Emily Macdonald
Greenfield Grazing

Greenfield Grazing

At Greenfield Grazing, an abandoned apple orchard incorporates silvopasture, where grazing among the declining trees has promoted desirable forage species while providing feed from fallen apples.

Emily's agroforestry background

Agroforestry fits well with Greenfield's wooded landscape and Michigan's forested heritage, offering an alternative to the industrial model. While challenges include the long maturation time for trees, management complexity, and high initial costs, the benefits include improved animal welfare, parasite resistance, increased feed diversity, and climate resilience. In the future, Emily hopes to expand into alley cropping for timber, hay, and sap production, but capital investment and long-term returns remain significant barriers.